

Nordic Quantum Ideation Workshop: Pilot Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings from the Nordic Quantum Ideation Workshop held in Copenhagen on 8 to 10 April 2026 as part of the Nordic Quantum Innovation project supported by Nordic Innovation.

The workshop tested a low-barrier ideation format developed by TUM Venture Lab Quantum and adapted to a Nordic context in collaboration with KU Lighthouse. The purpose was to examine whether a short, structured and technology-driven workshop could serve as a relevant first step for activating more early-stage innovation within Nordic quantum research.

The workshop brought together 16 participants from Denmark, Sweden and Norway, representing universities and innovation environments across the region. Participants worked in four coached teams and developed early use cases based on their technologies, culminating in final presentations and cross-team feedback.

The pilot shows that the format is relevant and well received in a Nordic context. Participants reported high overall satisfaction, strong perceived relevance and a high likelihood of recommending the workshop to others. The workshop created strong engagement, supported early venture thinking and helped build cross-border connections across the Nordic quantum ecosystem.

To support the Nordic network building and longer-term progression of selected ideas or teams, the format would benefit from light post-workshop follow-up and clearer linkage to relevant support structures at participants' home institutions.

Based on the pilot, the overall recommendation is to use this format as a building block in a broader Nordic effort to activate early-stage quantum innovation. Rolling out future editions across the Nordic region, combined with light post-workshop follow-up, would strengthen participant outcomes, help build and anchor a Nordic network, and generate the learning needed to refine and scale the model over time.

1. Background and purpose

The Nordic Quantum Ideation Workshop was carried out as part of the Nordic Quantum Innovation project supported by Nordic Innovation. The broader purpose of the project was to explore how more early-stage innovation can be activated within Nordic quantum research and to test whether a low-barrier ideation format can serve as a relevant first step in that process.

The workshop was delivered in collaboration with TUM Venture Lab Quantum and KU Lighthouse. It builds on an ideation format developed by TUM Venture Lab Quantum, which has been delivered five times over the past three years. Within the Nordic Quantum Innovation project, the purpose was to bring this format into a Nordic setting, test it in practice with participants from across the region, and begin anchoring the process in a Nordic context.

The rationale for selecting this format was threefold. First, it is already tested on a target group closely aligned with the one addressed in this project. Second, it offers a relatively low-barrier and time-efficient entry point for researchers who are curious about innovation but not yet ready for a longer programme. Third, it is specifically designed to start from the technology itself and work towards applications, use cases and possible market relevance, which is particularly important in research-based quantum innovation where opportunities often begin with a technical capability rather than an identified market need.

The workshop should therefore be understood both as a concrete pilot activity and as part of a broader exploration of how early-stage quantum innovation may be supported more systematically across the Nordic region.

2. Workshop concept

Target group and Nordic scope

The workshop is designed for participants from across the Nordic region. The target group includes PhD students, postdocs, researchers and principal investigators working in quantum-related fields, including physics, materials, chemistry, sensing, communication, computing and related enabling technologies. Participants may join either with a concrete idea they wish to explore or with a broader curiosity about entrepreneurship and research-based start-up creation.

Concept and format

The Nordic Quantum Ideation Workshop is structured as an opening event followed by two full workshop days. It is designed as a low-barrier first step into innovation and venture thinking for quantum researchers and related technical profiles. The format starts from the technology itself and explores where relevant applications, use cases and early market opportunities may exist. This distinguishes it from more traditional demand-driven innovation formats, which typically begin with an identified market need.

Feedback structure

A simple but effective feedback structure is integrated into the workshop to ensure active participation and constructive dialogue across teams. During selected feedback sessions, three roles are distributed among participants: one person is responsible for timekeeping, one for summarising the concept briefly, and one for giving the first feedback or question. This creates a clear structure

for discussion, lowers the threshold for participation and helps ensure that all teams receive engaged and constructive feedback.

Workshop flow

Opening event

The purpose of the opening event is to create energy, establish the teams and provide participants with an early sense of what a research-to-venture journey can look like in practice. The evening included welcome, team formation and a founder talk by Peter Lodahl from the Niels Bohr Institute and Sparrow Quantum. Peter shared reflections on the transition from academic research to company building. The opening event concluded with a shared dinner for participants, coaches and organisers.

Day 1

The purpose of Day 1 is to help participants move from a technical starting point towards possible applications and early opportunity areas. The central tool in this process was an adapted Technology Canvas used to translate technical capabilities into possible applications and use cases. Through facilitated team exercises and coaching, participants examine the core capabilities of their technologies, explore possible application areas and begin identifying promising use cases and value creation logics.

Day 2

The purpose of Day 2 is to help participants move from selected use cases towards a more coherent venture framing and a final pitch. The day begins with team presentations of the one or two use cases identified on Day 1, allowing teams to test their thinking and receive feedback before committing to a final concept. From there, the focus shifts to articulation, prioritisation and communication. Additional inputs introduce participants to early-stage considerations related to intellectual property, start-up financing, problem-solution fit, value proposition and market understanding. The workshop concludes with a final pitch session.

3. Results and immediate outcomes

The workshop brought together 16 participants from Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Participants represented Aarhus University, the University of Copenhagen, the University of Southern Denmark, OsloMet, Linköping University, Lund University and Smile VentureHub.

The participants were organised into four teams, each supported by a dedicated coach throughout the workshop. By the end of Day 1, each team had identified one or two use cases for further consideration. Following the morning presentations and feedback on Day 2, all teams converged on one selected use case to bring forward.

Three of the four teams concluded the workshop with a final pitch. One team was unable to complete the final pitch in its intended format, as two of the three team members had to leave early due to travel constraints. The remaining team member instead presented a pitch connected to a proof-of-concept grant application. While different in format, this still provided a relevant basis for discussion and feedback.

A clear immediate outcome of the workshop was the participants' ability to move from a predominantly technical starting point towards more application-oriented and venture-relevant thinking within a short and intensive format. Across the four teams, the process led to more clearly articulated use cases, stronger framing of possible applications and a more structured understanding of how a research-based opportunity may be developed further.

Another important outcome was the quality of exchange across teams. Participants actively contributed questions, reflections and feedback to one another's cases throughout the workshop. This created a collaborative atmosphere, strengthened the overall learning process and improved the quality of the final outputs.

4. Participant evaluation and feedback

A total of 12 participants submitted feedback after the workshop. Overall, the evaluation was very positive. The likelihood of recommending the workshop to a friend or fellow founder was 9.33/10, the relevance of content was rated 8.67/10, and the overall workshop rating was 9.08/10. These scores indicate a high level of satisfaction and suggest that participants found the workshop both relevant and worth recommending.

The session-level evaluations were also strong across most parts of the programme. The founder's talk on the opening day scored 4.92/5. On Day 1, defining the baseline technology scored 4.25/5, identifying potential application areas using GenAI scored 3.83/5, and use case ideation scored 4.25/5. On Day 2, recap and use case presentation scored 4.58/5, start-up financing 4.75/5, intellectual property management 4.42/5, start-up roadmap definition 4.08/5, and pitch presentation 4.58/5.

The qualitative feedback reinforces this overall picture. Participants highlighted the overall quality of the workshop, the strong organisation, the mix of presentations and teamwork, the collaboration within teams, and the practical value of working concretely with a case, a use case and an early-stage pitch. Several participants also emphasised the value of hearing from entrepreneurs and appreciated the coaching, interactive exercises and the opportunity to engage with a broader Nordic group.

At the same time, the evaluation points to several useful areas for improvement. A recurring theme was the wish for more time, both for networking across teams and for team-based work, including pitch preparation. Some participants noted that the GenAI element was somewhat confusing or not yet sufficiently integrated into the process. Others suggested that more founder and investor perspectives could strengthen future editions. One response also pointed to challenges in team formation and to the intensity of the final sprint, suggesting that the pacing and support structure could be further refined.

5. Key learnings

What worked well

The workshop confirms that there is real interest in low-barrier innovation formats among quantum researchers and related technical profiles in the Nordic region. The overall level of engagement, the quality of participation and the positive evaluation suggest that a short and structured ideation process can serve as a relevant first step for participants who are curious about entrepreneurship but not yet ready for a longer or more demanding programme.

A second clear learning is that the format succeeded in creating momentum and commitment within a short time frame. Several participants expressed interest in continuing to work with their ideas beyond the workshop. This suggests that the format can do more than create awareness alone; it can also help surface motivation and generate early traction around selected cases.

The workshop also demonstrated the value of combining expert input, team-based work, coaching and structured peer feedback. One of the strongest aspects of the format was the active dialogue across teams, which contributed both to the quality of the final outputs and to the overall learning experience. The simple feedback structure helped create a setting in which participants contributed actively and constructively to one another's work.

Future adjustments

Several participants would have liked more time for networking, more interaction across teams and more time for team-based work, especially in the later stages of pitch development. At the same time, maintaining the current two-and-a-half-day format remains important, as the low-barrier design is one of the workshop's core strengths.

Rather than extending the workshop, future editions would therefore benefit more from sharper internal prioritisation. This includes reducing time pressure in the final sprint, reviewing team formation, and creating slightly more space for cross-team exchange and focused teamwork within the existing format. One concrete adjustment could be to place more emphasis on networking after the final pitches and to communicate clearly in advance that participants are encouraged to reserve time for informal interaction both after Day 1 and after the final session on Day 2.

The GenAI-related element also appears to require refinement. The feedback suggests that this part of the programme was not equally clear or useful for all participants. One practical improvement would be to prepare a shared PowerPoint deck and distribute it to all participants before the workshop. This deck could include the key prompts used during the process, including the specific text to be used in the AI-supported exercises, as well as a simple outline of the final pitch structure. Providing this material in advance would make it easier for participants to follow the process, reuse the material directly during the workshop, and work more efficiently within their teams.

A further adjustment concerns the final pitch format. In the current workshop, the requested pitch deck covered a relatively large number of slides and elements. Going forward, it may be more effective to simplify this structure and place stronger emphasis on problem, customer and use case logic. For this target group, a more focused pitch format is likely to improve both clarity and quality.

Finally, future workshops should avoid ending on a Friday. This created practical constraints for Nordic participants travelling home and, in at least one case, affected full team participation in the final session.

Implications for future design

The pilot suggests that this type of workshop can serve as a valuable first step in a broader Nordic approach to early-stage quantum innovation. The original TUM Venture Lab Quantum format has shown strong results in a local university setting, with eight teams converted into start-ups, corresponding to approximately 23%, and with additional researchers remaining engaged beyond the workshop. The Nordic pilot operated in a different context, with participants drawn from multiple institutions and countries.

The pilot indicates that the workshop creates value on several levels at once: it activates participants, introduces early venture thinking and helps build cross-border connections across the Nordic quantum ecosystem. At the same time, the pilot suggests that the workshop works best as a first step rather than a stand-alone intervention if the ambition is to support further development of selected ideas or teams.

6. Recommendations

The pilot suggests that this type of workshop creates value on several levels at once: it activates participants, introduces early venture thinking, and helps build connections across the Nordic quantum ecosystem. At the same time, the pilot also indicates that workshop participation alone is unlikely to be sufficient if the ambition is to support longer-term progression of selected ideas or teams.

A key recommendation is therefore to combine future workshops with a light follow-up structure. This would help participants clarify next steps, connect relevant cases to support structures at their home institution or within their national ecosystem, and maintain momentum beyond the workshop itself. It would also create a better basis for learning about which types of participants, ideas and teams continue to develop over time.

Follow-up would not only support individual participants and teams. It would also help anchor the Nordic network created through the workshop and make it possible to learn more systematically about how such a network can be sustained and developed over time. This is particularly relevant in a Nordic context, where cross-border connections and stronger innovation linkages are themselves part of the long-term value.

Based on the pilot, the overall recommendation is therefore to use this format as a building block in a broader Nordic effort to activate early-stage quantum innovation. Rolling out future editions across the Nordic region, combined with modest post-workshop follow-up, would strengthen participant outcomes, help build and anchor a Nordic network, and generate the learning needed to refine and scale the model over time.

Appendix A. Workshop Agenda

Wednesday, 8 April 2026. Opening event

16:00–16:30 Arrival interval

16:30–17:00 Welcome and introduction

17:00–18:00 Team formation

18:00–19:30 Founder talk by Peter Lodahl, Niels Bohr Institute / Sparrow Quantum

20:00–21:30 Shared dinner for all participants

Thursday, 9 April 2026. Workshop Day 1

08:30–09:00 Coffee and grouping

09:00–09:55 Welcome and introduction

09:55–10:15 Introduction to the Technology Canvas

10:15–12:00 Teamwork: Technology Canvas

12:00–13:00 Lunch break

13:00–13:30 AI-powered ideation and decision-making

13:30–14:00 Introduction to use case selection

14:00–14:15 Coffee break

14:15–15:30 Teamwork: Use case evaluation

15:30–15:45 Coffee break

15:45–16:30 Founder insights

16:30–17:00 Check-out, homework and closing

Friday, 10 April 2026. Workshop Day 2

08:30–08:35 Welcome and check-in

08:35–08:55 Use case fine-tuning and rehearsal

08:55–09:35 Start-up financing strategy

09:35–10:50 Presentation of use cases

10:50–11:05 Coffee break

11:05–11:45 Intellectual property management

11:45–12:00 Introduction to pitch deck creation and presenting

12:00–13:00 Lunch break and walk-and-talk

13:00–13:10 Introduction to problem-solution fit and value proposition

13:10–13:30 Teamwork: Problem-solution fit and value proposition

13:30–13:45 Coffee break

13:45–13:55 Introduction to market, competitors and business model

13:55–14:15 Teamwork: Market, competitors and business model

14:15–14:25 Introduction to start-up roadmap and team

14:25–14:45 Teamwork: Start-up roadmap and team

14:45–15:00 Coffee break

15:00–15:15 Pitch deck fine-tuning and rehearsal

15:15–16:45 Final pitches and feedback

16:45–17:00 Next steps, check-out and feedback form